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THE CHURCH AND THE WAR

We are in war. That is now a determining fact in American life. Whether we regret it and bemoan it, or welcome it and rejoice in it, the situation is one of war. We must do business while at war, study while at war, pray and serve our world while at war. To act, think, worship, on any other assumption is madness.

The church must do its work in the midst of a nation at war. There is no alternative that does not smack of treason.

What then is the duty of the church?

First of all it is to remember that it is a church and not a military institution. Its pastors must remain spiritual leaders. Its members must be champions of the spiritual life.

To forget this fundamental duty is poor patriotism and poorer religion.

It is the duty of the church to fill men's hearts with confidence in spiritual things. Ministers are not medicine-men of civilization, beating the tom-toms of selfish nationalism, heralding an American God and an American gospel. The nation must be heartened in its sacrifices by interpretations of the divine will. We are on God's side so long as we fight to preserve the precious heritage of the spiritual forces in history, liberty, democracy, and human rights.

We dare not pray for victory were we fighting for land, or booty, or conquest, or national supremacy, or the enforcement of our political ideals upon unwilling people.

We fight to make the world safe for democracy, not for the subjugation of a world to democracy.

The church must see to it that hatred is not allowed to dim the nobility of our present purposes.

The church must resolutely refuse to class its expenditures for missions at home and abroad, for the welfare of society, and for the preservation of public morals with the luxuries in which we economize.

Its work must be increased, not curtailed. The times are too exigent for retrenchment. If the gospel was needed in times of peace, it is doubly needed in the time of war.

We must expand in ministering to the souls of men.

We must redouble our efforts to protect the soldier. Moral deterioration always waits upon war. The church must mobilize its forces to make soldiering safe for character.

So, too, must the church stimulate men to a larger sense of obligation to those whom the war will make its victims. This is the time to give money, not to make money. Beyond the cheerful submission to taxes and loans, there must be also the contributions to the Red Cross Society and to other agencies of helpfulness.

The church must teach repentance and prayer. Death is closer than ever before. Life is more serious. Why obscure these solemn facts?

And, if we are to face them as we should, the Christian leader must talk about something more vital than the fulfilment of prophecy in "tanks," aeroplanes, and Armageddon. He must bring men's souls to God. Sin and death call for a deliverer.

Let the church preach the good news of a God who works his loving will even through the hatreds of men and who fills with new courage and faith the hearts of those who through personal sacrifice and national repentance present themselves to him in service to their world.